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2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Update on indigenous peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present report provides an update on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the perspective of indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as an expert body of the Economic and Social Council, plays an important role in providing expert advice on how to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are effectively accounted for and realized in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The report includes substantive inputs from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the thematic reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018, along with reflections on the theme of the high-level political forum in 2018, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”.

* E/C.19/2018/1.



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 70/1, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which came into effect on 1 January 2016. It has been acclaimed as serving to set a transformative and ambitious worldwide agenda. In the Millennium Development Goals, no mention was made of indigenous peoples; by contrast, the Sustainable Development Goals represent a step forward for indigenous peoples. The present report provides follow-up to the update on indigenous peoples and the 2030 Agenda that was prepared for the sixteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (E/C.19/2017/50).

2. The 2030 Agenda contains six direct references to indigenous peoples. It is vital that, in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples be fully respected and incorporated into the normative framework. The Declaration constitutes a framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world's indigenous peoples and provides guidance on incorporating the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples into the development paradigm.

3. The Permanent Forum is an expert body of the Economic and Social Council and has a key role to play in ensuring that the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples are considered in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The present report includes substantive inputs from the Permanent Forum for the thematic reviews of the 2018 high-level political forum.

II. Overview of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from an indigenous perspective

4. The Sustainable Development Goals and targets include six explicit references to indigenous peoples. In particular, target 2.3 reflects a commitment to doubling the agricultural output of indigenous small-scale farmers, and target 4.5 a commitment to ensuring equal access to education for indigenous children. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States also expressed a strong commitment to empowering and engaging indigenous peoples in the implementation of the Goals and were encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress in achieving them, including at the national level, and to draw on the contributions of indigenous peoples in the reviews (see resolution 70/1, para. 79).

Data disaggregation and indicators

5. In its resolution 71/313, the General Assembly adopted the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the national level, the global list of indicators functions as a source of guidance for the development of national indicator frameworks to review national progress towards sustainable development. A detailed overview of the indicators that are crucial to monitoring progress for indigenous peoples can be found in paragraphs 12 to 17 of the update prepared for the sixteenth session of the Permanent Forum (E/C.19/2017/5).

III. Gaps and challenges in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6. The Permanent Forum has conducted discussions and dialogues on the 2030 Agenda at its annual sessions. As the main global forum for the discussion of indigenous issues, the Permanent Forum has a unique capacity to bring together Member States and indigenous peoples, with the support of agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, to deliberate on substantive issues and, as an expert body, to provide input on these issues to the Economic and Social Council.

7. The Permanent Forum regards the 2030 Agenda as a priority area and has reiterated its commitment to providing advice and assistance to the Council and to agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system on the implementation of the Agenda, including through active contributions to and participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

8. Drawing on the key issues that emerged from expert panel discussions and dialogues, the Permanent Forum, at its sixteenth session in May 2017, made a number of recommendations regarding the 2030 Agenda (see E/2017/43, paras. 88–93).

9. The Permanent Forum emphasized that the recognition, protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources would make a significant contribution to achieving not only Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 but also all the other Goals. In that regard, the Forum urged Governments to take all measures necessary to protect indigenous peoples' rights to their territories and resources in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The Forum also recommended that the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators provide support for the inclusion and methodological development of core indicators for indigenous peoples in the global indicator framework, in particular the inclusion of the indicator on the legal recognition of the land rights of indigenous peoples for the targets under Goals 1 and 2.

10. The Permanent Forum recognized the importance of data disaggregation, as noted in target 17.18 of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, it recommended that the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and others, redouble efforts to ensure the disaggregation of data relating to indigenous peoples and promote the inclusion of complementary indicators on indigenous peoples' rights in the national reports of Governments relating to the Goals and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, which was adopted at the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Forum further recommended that ECLAC provide a guidance note and organize a mutual learning event, jointly with other regional commissions, to share best practices relating to data disaggregation on the basis of indigenous identifiers and self-identification, as used in the 2010 round of censuses conducted in several countries in Latin America.

11. The Permanent Forum called upon Governments to establish permanent, open and inclusive mechanisms for consultation, participation and representation of indigenous peoples in local, regional, national and international processes and bodies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. It also called upon Governments to allocate adequate resources for the implementation of plans that include indigenous peoples and to ensure data disaggregation on the basis of indigenous identifiers.

12. The Permanent Forum recommended that relevant countries among those participating in voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum in 2017 include indigenous peoples in their reviews, reports and delegations. The Forum invited those Member States to report to the Forum, at its seventeenth session in April 2018, on good practices regarding the inclusion of indicators relating to indigenous peoples in their voluntary national reviews.

General Assembly resolution 72/155 on the rights of indigenous peoples

13. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/155, addressed several issues regarding the 2030 Agenda and indigenous peoples. The General Assembly:

- Encouraged Member States to give due consideration to all the rights of indigenous peoples in fulfilling the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the elaboration of national programmes (para. 14).
- Encouraged States to consider including in their voluntary national reviews for the high-level political forum on sustainable development and their national and global reports information related to indigenous peoples on the progress made and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, bearing in mind paragraphs 78 and 79 of the 2030 Agenda, and also encouraged States to compile disaggregated data to measure progress and to ensure that no one is left behind (para. 15).
- Encouraged the Secretary-General to include information pertinent to indigenous peoples in the forthcoming annual reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (para. 16).
- Stressed the need to strengthen the commitment of States and the entities of the United Nations system to mainstreaming the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples into development policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels, and encouraged them to give due consideration to the rights of indigenous peoples in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda (para. 17).
- Also stressed the need for indigenous peoples of all regions to contribute to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and encouraged States to engage with indigenous peoples at the local, national and regional levels in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (para. 18).
- Invited the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples to give due consideration, within their mandates, to the rights of indigenous peoples as related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (para. 19).
- Encouraged the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to continue to provide inputs on indigenous issues to the high-level political forum on sustainable development for consideration in its thematic reviews (para. 20).

IV. Monitoring the progress of indigenous peoples in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

14. The year 2017 was of particular significance for indigenous peoples, marking 10 years since the adoption of the landmark United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in September 2007.

15. In 2017, indigenous peoples continued their engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. They participated actively at the national, regional and global levels to ensure that the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples were upheld in the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The engagement of indigenous peoples and the progress achieved at various levels is highlighted in paragraphs 16 to 31 below.

2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development

16. Representatives of indigenous peoples participated in the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, as they had in 2016. The indigenous peoples major group, as one of the nine major groups reporting to the Economic and Social Council, participated in the meetings of the forum and made statements both in the general thematic discussions and during the voluntary national reviews. The Permanent Forum was represented by the Chair of the Forum.

17. In the ministerial declaration adopted as the outcome document of the 2017 high-level political forum (see A/72/3, chap. VI.E, para. 55), the ministers and high representatives included four specific references to indigenous peoples: in paragraph 2, they listed the vulnerable groups whose needs were reflected in the 2030 Agenda, including indigenous peoples; in paragraph 14, they stressed the importance of poverty eradication and social protection systems for all, in particular indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups; in paragraph 15, they noted the vulnerability of small-scale food producers, including indigenous peoples, to extreme weather events as a result of climate change and land degradation; and in paragraph 28 they called for efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, in order to ensure accountability.

18. In addition, they addressed some important priorities for indigenous peoples: they committed themselves to embracing diversity in cities and human settlements and to taking steps to ensure that local institutions promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies (para. 8); they noted the importance of coherent policies and accountable institutions that respect tenure rights (para. 15); and they stressed the need for data disaggregated by, among other things, ethnicity (para. 27).

19. The summary of the 2017 high-level political forum by the President of the Economic and Social Council¹ contains five references to indigenous peoples, which relate to addressing the inequality that affects vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples (p. 2); overcoming discrimination against vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples (p. 4); ensuring healthy lives and well-being for indigenous peoples, among others (p. 7); utilizing indigenous knowledge related to oceans (p. 9); and harnessing indigenous knowledge for the purpose of science,

¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16673HLPF_2017_Presidents_summary.pdf.

technology and innovation capacity-building with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda (p. 11).

20. As a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, the Permanent Forum provided substantive inputs for the thematic reviews of the high-level political forum in 2017, highlighting the need to ensure that indigenous peoples are not left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The substantive inputs are available on the online review platform of the high-level political forum.²

21. Indigenous issues were also raised at the high-level political forum through a side event on the theme "Overcoming poverty: indigenous concepts of well-being and development", which was held on 12 July 2017, co-organized by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the indigenous peoples major group and the International Indigenous Women's Forum and co-sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). As a result of the discussions, the following recommendations were highlighted as important for advancing indigenous peoples' rights and development priorities in the process of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Ensure data disaggregation according to ethnicity or indigenous identifiers across all Goals
- Include an indicator on secure and equitable rights to the tenure of land and resources in indicator lists
- Ensure mechanisms for indigenous peoples' participation in implementation, follow-up and review, including in the high-level political forum and voluntary national reviews
- Ensure that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Voluntary national reviews at the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development

22. An analysis of the reports submitted for voluntary national reviews in 2017 reveals different approaches taken by Member States to the incorporation of indigenous issues in their reports. Among the 43 reports discussed during the high-level political forum in 2017, there were some positive examples of consistent efforts to mainstream indigenous issues.

23. The synthesis of voluntary national reviews prepared by the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs³ includes a section on indigenous peoples, in which it is explained that, in their reports, countries considered indigenous peoples both as a group in need of concerted support and as actors engaged in enhanced implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It mentions some positive elements in the reports submitted by Chile, Malaysia and Nepal. Stakeholders also helped with the development of tools for data collection. For example, in Denmark, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs contributed to the development of the Indigenous Navigator, a community-based tool

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/inputs>.

³ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17109Synthesis_Report_VNRs_2017.pdf.

for collecting disaggregated data to monitor the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights in relation to the Goals.

24. In its report to the high-level political forum,⁴ the indigenous peoples major group noted that poverty was a factor in the food insecurity of indigenous peoples. This alarming condition was the consequence of historical colonization, subjugation and assimilation, the prevailing discriminatory structures and the systematic violation of the rights of indigenous peoples. The widespread loss of lands, territories and resources had weakened their customary systems, which were the bases of their distinct identities, dignity and well-being. The state of impoverishment of indigenous peoples resulted from their lack of ownership and control over their lands and resources and their lack of food security. The major group provided six key recommendations, as follows:

(a) When designing poverty reduction and food security strategies and programmes, recognize indigenous peoples as distinct groups that have specific rights and are affected by specific circumstances and ensure their effective participation;

(b) Ensure data disaggregation based on indigenous identity;

(c) Institutionalize mechanisms for the effective participation and representation of indigenous peoples in processes relating to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Legally recognize the customary collective land rights of indigenous peoples and adopt indicators to monitor progress;

(e) Ensure that free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples is required on development projects that affect them; establish an effective grievance mechanism and ensure equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms;

(f) Ensure adequate finance and resources for targeted programmes in plans that address poverty, food security, health and the self-determined development of indigenous peoples.

25. The report of Costa Rica included the perspective of indigenous peoples under several Goals. For example, under Goal 1, representatives of the eight indigenous peoples in the country participated in a national indigenous gathering in November 2016 and presented the United Nations system with a vision for 2030. This vision included addressing poverty from a multidimensional, intercultural and human rights perspective, with respect for the world views of indigenous peoples and their development concept of *buen vivir* (living well); and adjusting State programmes for combating poverty to the specific needs and demands of indigenous peoples and the geographical and sociocultural realities of their territories. Specific input from indigenous peoples was also included under Goals 4, 5 and 14.

26. Chile reported on the specific challenges that its indigenous population was facing, including high multidimensional poverty rates. Chile also mainstreamed indigenous issues throughout its report. The inclusion of a number of disaggregated indicators under targets 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 should be highlighted as a very positive element. Also noteworthy was the establishment of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and the National Council of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the specific councils for each of the nine indigenous peoples recognized in national legislation.

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14942SDG-IPMG.pdf>.

27. Malaysia provided data regarding the incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples, in particular the Orang Asli, under Goal 1. Under Goal 15, it highlighted the strengthening of partnerships with indigenous and local communities as a continuing priority and mentioned, as one of its future aims, the need to leverage indigenous and local communities in the management of natural resources, including empowering them to give or withhold consent to proposed projects that might affect their lands.

28. The report submitted by Guatemala included national targets for the reduction of chronic malnutrition in children under the age of 5, with an emphasis on children from the Maya, Xinka and Garífuna peoples and from rural areas, and the participation of the Maya, Xinka and Garífuna peoples in political processes on an equitable basis. The report submitted by Panama made reference to the comprehensive development plan for the indigenous peoples of Panama. In its report, Japan mentioned the country's support, through its international assistance in the areas of protection and capacity-building, for human security, including that of indigenous peoples, who were prone to be in a vulnerable position. In a third group of reports, references to indigenous peoples were still sporadic but created scope for more comprehensive inclusion of indigenous issues in the future. That group comprised, for example, Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador and Nepal. In Nepal, the amended Civil Service Act reserves a percentage of public service positions for women and marginalized groups, including Dalits, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities.

29. Regarding the participation of indigenous peoples in the national processes under the 2030 Agenda, the reports of Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama included mention of consultations, dialogues or workshops, whereas in those of Argentina and Peru the participation of the official bodies responsible for indigenous issues was mentioned. In its report, Ethiopia mentioned the participation of pastoralists in national consultations.

Global reports on sustainable development

30. The report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66) does not include any data disaggregated by ethnicity or indigenous identity across the Goals. It refers, under Goal 4, to indigenous peoples as one of the vulnerable populations in respect of which increased efforts are necessary to ensure inclusive and equitable education.

31. The note by the Secretariat synthesizing voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums (E/HLPF/2017/3) contains an analysis of the situation of indigenous peoples and several important comments in that regard. For example, contributors highlighted the importance of indigenous peoples' engagement in implementation and policy processes at the national level (para. 25); emphasized the human rights imperative to address inequality and discrimination through, among other things, legislative review with a focus on the rights of indigenous peoples (para. 29); noted the benefits of providing indigenous peoples with access to information and communications technology (para. 46) and referred to the need to give special attention to indigenous women, compared with women in general, with regard to poverty (para. 66). They also highlighted the customary rights and laws of indigenous peoples and local communities with regard to accessing, using, governing and managing lands and natural resources (para. 77); noted the importance of private sector accountability, including in the case of business enterprises that have adverse impacts on the livelihoods and rights of local and indigenous communities or on the environment (para. 111); and called for the systematic integration of indigenous

community representatives into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (para. 117 (b)).

V. Reflections on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, from the perspective of indigenous peoples

32. In 2018, the participants in the high-level political forum will consider the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” and will also review Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15. These Goals are relevant to the concerns of indigenous peoples, who are often among the most vulnerable, poor and marginalized and are among those most likely to be left behind.

33. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development. The Permanent Forum has made recommendations relating to sustainability and resilience, calling for the establishment of processes of full, effective and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in sustainable development, including the identification of areas of work for collaborative implementation in various United Nations processes (see E/2003/43, chap. I.A, para. 29). The revitalization of indigenous peoples’ languages, cultural traditions and customs has also been identified as a way of building resilience (see E/2014/43, para. 45).

34. Over the past decade, participants in several international expert group meetings have also provided insights regarding indigenous peoples and sustainable and resilient societies. For example, “Indigenous peoples and forests” was the topic explored at an international expert group meeting to mark the International Year of Forests in 2011 (see E/C.19/2011/5), and sustainable consumption and production patterns were also addressed at an international expert group meeting on extractive industries, indigenous peoples’ rights and corporate social responsibility in 2009.⁵

35. In January 2018, participants in an international expert group meeting discussed the theme “Sustainable development in territories of indigenous peoples”⁶ and stressed the need to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources are upheld in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this respect, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides inspiration and practical guidance.

36. The special theme of the seventeenth session of the Permanent Forum, to be held in April 2018, will be “Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and resources”. The session will also include a discussion on indigenous peoples and the 2030 Agenda. The report of the Forum will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and will provide input for the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/meetings-and-workshops/7136-2.html>.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2/17-2.html>.